

Students' project has garden aflutter

■ A ribbon-cutting ceremony and butterfly release marked the unveiling of a new butterfly garden that students helped create.

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After four days of hard work, students at Mays Middle School released butterflies Thursday in a new, flower-filled garden they created to attract the colorful insects.

The project, part of the eighth annual neighborhood P.R.I.D.E. week, was organized by Miami-Dade's Team Metro South.

To attract the butterflies, students — with the help of adult volunteers — planted lantanas, hibiscus, milkweeds and impatiens.

In class, students learned about the butterfly's four-stage development process called metamorphosis.

"It starts as an egg; then it becomes a caterpillar, then a

chrysalis and then a butterfly," said seventh-grader Mabriela Morera, 13.

The project, unveiled with a ribbon-cutting ceremony Thursday, also gave students a lesson about cleaning and beautifying their environment. The school is at 11700 SW 216th St. in Goulds.

"It made our community better. Instead of having a big pile of dirt, we have a garden," said Michael Goodluck, 12, a sixth-grader.

The garden also will teach youngsters from nearby Pine Villa Elementary about the benefits of cleaning up, said Bryan Reyes, 14, a seventh-grader.

"When the little kids pass by, they'll see the garden and be inspired," he said.

Five maintenance students at the Homestead Job Corps Center applied what they've learned about landscaping to help with the project.

"I thought it was a great opportunity to show the public what they've learned," said Lorene Harris, a business-community liaison for Job Corps.

Claudette Connor, a student support specialist at the school who suggested the butterfly garden, said she was motivated by more than aesthetics.



PHOTOS BY C.W. GRIFFIN/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

A PIECE OF NATURE: Above, Mays Middle School students, faculty and volunteers gather in a ribbon-cutting ceremony Thursday to unveil a new butterfly garden. To attract the butterflies, bottom left, students planted lantanas, hibiscus, milkweeds and impatiens.

"We decided to have the garden for enjoyment and also for science teachers to have hands-on projects and activities," she said.

Nancy Mesa-Barea, an administrator with Team Metro South, said the hard

work was worth it.

"The kids came out and put their heart into this project," she said. "It made it very special that we all did it together."

To finish the work, some kids stayed at school until 6 p.m.

"We stayed after school some days. We were really dedicated," said seventh-grader Ashley Abinader, 13.

Local nurseries and businesses provided the plants, butterflies and other materials, Connor said.

